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Letter to Margaret Leary regarding SEAALL chapter awards, February 27, 1991

Timothy Coggins

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Southeastern Chapter
of the American Association
of Law Libraries, Inc.

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Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27599

February 27, 1991

Margaret A. Leary, Chair
Special Committee on Recruitment
University of Michigan
Law Library, Legal Research Bldg.
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109

Dear Margaret:

Enclosed is a response to your questions about chapter awards to support attendance at AALL Annual Meetings. The Southeastern Chapter awarded ten grants last year totalling \$3,000, but only five recipients used the funds to attend the Minneapolis meeting. Others used the funds to attend the SEAALL Spring Meeting and Institute, classes and for other purposes.

I have some comments about the Committee's report. Although I support the views about recruitment presented in the report and recognize the value of recruitment, I do have some concerns and comments about the report and the recommendations. The statistic on page 3 of the report (14% of current MLS students want to be law librarians) seems meaningless to me without some additional comparisons. If you compare AALL's membership (4,600) and ALA's membership (49,483), you should be able to ascertain a current proportion of general practising librarians to law librarians. Making this comparison shows that AALL membership is roughly 9.29% of ALA's membership. If you take all the library professional associations (ALA, AALL, SLA, and MLA), you find that there is a combined membership of 71,583. AALL's percentage of this total membership is less than 6%. Although these figures include some librarians who may be members of several associations and do not include many other librarians, they do provide an indication of the practising law librarians - somewhere between 9.29% and 6%. It seems, therefore, that 14% of MLS students expressing interest in law librarianship might be sufficient for the job opportunities available.

I am concerned also about recommendation number 4 on page 4 regarding reduced law school tuition for library employees. If the comment is directed only to library employees at law school libraries, then we are leaving out many of our important members, namely, those library employees who work in law firm, court and other law libraries. If only a portion of our members can derive the benefit of reduced law school tuition, then I am not sure

that we should recommend this without developing some mechanism for reduced tuition for law firm and other law library employees.

My next concern involves a statement on page 8: "The Committee is concerned about the new plan for charging library schools for placement information." Does AALL actually charge library school placement offices if they request copies of our job advertisements? If this is true, it seems to me that your committee's efforts at recruiting new members to the profession are being diminished by our own Association's attempt to make a few dollars for the lists and the information. Surely, we do not encourage many library school deans to think positively about law librarianship when they have to pay a fee to obtain information about vacancies in the law library profession. I may just not understand this statement.

I like the idea of the library school liaisons. It seems logical that the persons selected would be graduates who practice in an area near the library school, but it might need to be specifically stated in the recommendation. Although I would love to have a liaison to Simmons College in Boston, MA, it does not make sense for the Association to support a person in North Carolina to attend Simmons College activities. The correction might just be a recommendation that the liaison selected be a person who lives near the library school to save travel funds.

I am, as you probably expected, especially concerned about recommendation number 4 dealing with the grants to attend AALL Annual Meetings. I recognize the value and importance of recruitment, but I also feel that we have an obligation to our existing members. Six additional scholarships during a year when the Association already awarded \$63,205 worth of scholarships do not seem to me to be "better" than 60 \$500 grants to attend the annual meeting. Many of the recipients of these grants are likely not able to attend the meeting without the financial assistance. I agree that employers should shoulder the burden of sending these professionals to the annual meeting, but unfortunately this is not the reality of the situation. Many law firms are reducing the amount of support for their law firm libraries, state supported universities are cutting back or deleting entirely travel funds, and other state agencies such as the courts are also facing cutbacks and are reducing travel funds. I think that the division which occurred last year, \$30,000 for grants and \$63,205 for scholarships, is a good balance and addresses the needs of recruitment for new members and the budgetary reality facing many current members. We have just as strong an obligation to our current members as we do to the new people who might be interested in joining the profession.

Your report also addresses the issue of qualifications and the number of persons applying for the scholarships. Rather than increase the amount of money available for scholarships, it seems that we could do some things to make the process smoother. Requiring each applicant to make a large number of copies of the

application and the letters of reference discourages some people. Perhaps we should use some of the funds and make the copies in the Headquarters office after the applicant has submitted one copy of all documents. We might also do a better publicity job with our scholarship program.

Your committee has done a fine job with many of the public relations and publicity ideas to recruit new members to the profession.

Sincerely,

Timothy L. Coggins
President, SEAALL

cc: Carol Billings
Penny Hazelton
Carolyn Ahearn

My response to Margaret
Leary's Conte. report
on recruitment - some
problems will report I believe.